

The Mental Health of Minnesota Farmers:

Can Communication Help?

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Laura Hendrickson is an Account Supervisor at Russell Herder, a strategic advertising agency in Minneapolis that boasts 30+ years of experience in public health communication campaigns. Health communication has been a professional interest since graduating from the College of St. Benedict/St. John's University in 2011 with her B.A. in Communication and Biology. Rural public health, in particular, became her focus as she worked at the University of Minnesota School of Public Health where she learned about the adversities rural communities are up against. Having grown up in smalltown Spicer, Minnesota, she was able to draw parallels of struggles she witnessed and aims to give back to similar small towns.

As it relates to agriculture, Laura's father grew up on a farm in Redwood Falls, Minnesota producing various crops (corn, soybeans) as well as beef. She has fond memories of visiting her grandparents at their farmhouse, scaling the silo bin ladders, playing hide-and-seek between the rows of corn with her siblings and learning to drive a vehicle underage. When made aware of the current farmer suicide crisis and mental health struggles in rural Minnesota (and beyond), it was clear to Laura what she would choose to research as her M.A. Strategic Communication capstone project.

She hopes that bringing light and empathy to this issue warrants greater attention and understanding to the communities and individuals that support the industry Minnesota is so proudly built upon. Additionally, she wishes for farmers and other agricultural professionals to know that their work and daily struggles are recognized, valued and that they are not alone.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Poor mental health is plaguing the farming community across the world. Minnesota, which is home to a large farming population, is taking notice due to the tragic outcome these farmers face if left untreated—suicide. While extensive research has been conducted and communication campaigns have addressed suicide in general, little attention has been given to agricultural-related mental health issues. This research project aims to bring awareness to this quiet tragedy and fill the research gap by examining the question of whether a communication campaign could improve the mental health among Minnesota farmers.

To research this issue, 17 in-depth interviews were conducted in June 2018 with farmers & family members, agricultural professionals and health professionals. All participants lived, and farmed, within the state of Minnesota. Additionally, all interviewees were familiar with the topic of agricultural-related mental health issues and were very invested in being a part of this research to improve it.

The qualitative results of this research project identified the following themes:

- Farmers will do anything to maintain quality of life and the legacy of their farm
- Farmers' identity is intertwined with their chosen profession
- Removing the feeling of isolation would help struggling farmers
- Stigma is exacerbated in rural farm communities
- Money, or lack thereof, is a driving factor
- Confidentiality is key
- It's a complicated, multi-faceted issue

There are several limitations and suggestions for future research based on this research project. Because expert interviews are quantitative in nature, the results cannot be generalized. A follow-up survey with a larger sample would negate this issue. Further research would pinpoint the particular type of belief that's most important to farmers when considering whether or not to seek help for a mental health issue.

After examining the results, four key insights emerged:

1. Target spouses, wives, children and ag professionals who have consistent interaction with farmers as the campaign audience (ag loan lenders, tractor equipment reps, etc.)
2. Intertwine mental health discussions and resources within already-existing ag-related organizations, meetings and associations
3. Capitalize on “down-time” while farmers are in the cabs of their tractors
4. Offer some sort of free, introductory call to “test out” mental health services or provider without putting money on the line

INTRODUCTION

Most folks unfamiliar with agricultural work often picture farming as an idyllic, uncomplicated lifestyle. Sunny days spent outside, bountiful crops, work-free winters and a hearty paycheck is the layperson's perception. However, those in the agriculture industry know this a far cry from the truth. "Farming is not the beautiful thing you people in the city think it is, with beautiful cows running around and you're making lots of money. Farming is a tough damn business" (Kutner, 2016). Unpredictable factors such as drought, debilitating injuries or a lack of functional equipment can wreak havoc on a season's profits causing long-term financial setbacks in addition to major stress. As a farmer points out, "there is particularly a lot of depression in rural society. It happens for a lot of different reasons. A lot of it is our roller-coaster economics. People outside of farming, I think, understand that farming is hard work. What they don't understand is the depth of the lows that can hit you at any one time, with just one small problem that can lead to hundreds of little problems" (Zito, 2017). A flailing farming economy has put so much stress on both American and local Minnesota farmers alike, that they are killing themselves in record numbers (Snee, 2017). In fact, the past five years has brought such turmoil to farmers that the U.S. is currently under a farmer suicide crisis.

The purpose of this research project is to examine whether a communication campaign could help improve mental health among Minnesota farmers. The primary objective is to learn and analyze the held beliefs of farmers and those around them, to seek mental health treatment as a means to prevent suicide. Is it behavioral/attitudinal, normative or efficacy/control beliefs that are potentially stunting farmers from seeking the mental health help they need? This research

will provide interested communicators with results and recommendations from a belief elicitation survey that will help inform messaging to accurately speak to and resonate with farmers, and those who work closely with them.

RESEARCH QUESTION

This study seeks to answer the question of, can communication improve Minnesota farmer mental health by addressing held beliefs that may be the root cause for farmers' intention not to seek help for mental health? In other words, what is the relationship between farmers' beliefs and their intention to seek help for a mental health issue?

According to Merriam-Webster, the study's independent variable of beliefs is defined as, "something that is accepted, considered to be true, or held as an opinion."

According to Marco Yzer (2015), the study's dependent variable of intention is defined as, "a function of attitude, perceived normative pressure and perceived behavioral control regarding benefit use." In other words, what it takes someone to specifically accomplish, or conversely, not accomplish something. Breaking it down further, Yzer expands to explain the definitions of attitude, perceived norm and behavioral control. "Attitude is a function of behavioral beliefs or the perceived likelihood of various consequences of benefit use. Perceived norm is a function of normative beliefs, which are perceptions of social support from particular members in people's social networks. Lastly, perceived behavioral control is a function of control beliefs, which regard the extent to which specific situational circumstances facilitate or hinder benefit use" (Yzer, 2015).

For purposes of this study, farmers are defined as individuals whose occupation falls under the umbrella of an agricultural professional such as farmer, rancher, farm hand or farm operator. In their day-to-day work, they deal with crop and/or livestock and it's the, or one of the, primary sources of income.

Applying Theory

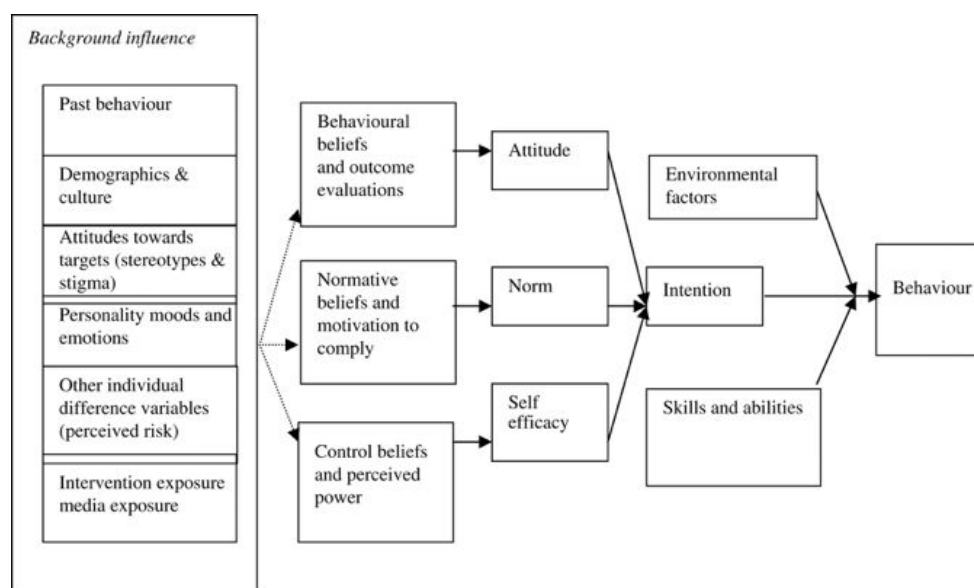
This research question was explored using the theory of Reasoned Action Approach, proposed by Martin Fishbein as a way to explain how proximate determinants are highly correlated with performing a given behavior. Marco Yzer, local University of Minnesota health communication researcher, explains that the Reasoned Action Approach is “a theory that has proven its ability to explain multiple behaviors in terms of unique sets of determinant variables and for its ability to inform health promotion interventions” (Yzer, 2015). To address proximate determinants that lead to a desired behavior in a futuristic communication campaign, you would target the population's beliefs through messaging.

Fishbein and Yzer (2003), discuss the usefulness of applying this theory to develop effective health communication strategies. Their rationale serves as the heart of this research project and what it's set out to accomplish. “Proper use of theory should help the researcher identify whether, in any given population, a particular behavior is determined primarily by attitudinal, normative, or efficacy considerations, or some combination thereof. It should further lead to the identification of a number of behavioral, normative, or control beliefs that clearly discriminate between people who do or do not engage in the behavior in question, that is, beliefs that are highly correlated with the intention or behavior” (Fishbein & Yzer, 2003). Specifically,

they looked at condom use and how participants in the studies rated their beliefs of them: what is your attitude toward condoms (behavioral), would individuals or groups in your peer network approve of your use of condoms (normative) and what factors or circumstances might make using condoms easier (control). The research will aim to glean which types of beliefs (behavioral, normative or control) might correlate with the behavior intention of farmers to seek (or conversely, not to seek) mental health treatment. And thus, communication can be tailored to address that specific belief or set of beliefs.

Background Influence

A critical component of Martin Fishbein's Reasoned Action Approach is the area of background influence. While this study focuses on the attitudinal, normative and efficacy beliefs that predict behavior intention, it's important to examine the factors that inform beliefs farmers hold. Factors include past behavior; demographic/culture; attitudes/stereotypes/norms; personality; perceived risk; and intervention exposure/media exposure.



(Table 1: Reasoned Action Theory. Nagler, R (2017). *Mass Communication and Public Health*, Day 8, Slide 6).

The subsequent literature review will examine those exact factors such as farmer demographics and culture, the stigma and attitudes they carry and the innate, common mentality they share as it relates to agricultural work and their life. Additionally, to further inquire about the weight background influences carry, they could be topics in a subsequent survey.

LITERATURE REVIEW

History Repeating Itself; 1980's Farm Crisis

What's happening currently in the agricultural industry is not a new phenomenon for farmers who lived through a similar period in the 1980's. From agricultural banks to makers of farm equipment, everyone was in ruin (2017b). It was the worst agricultural economic crisis since the Great Depression. "Market prices crashed. Loans were called in. Interest rates doubled overnight. Farmers were forced to liquidate their operations and evicted from their land. There were fights at grain elevators, shootings in local banks. The suicide rate soared" (Weingarten, 2017). 10 years prior to the fall, wheat and soybean exports tripled in price due to the U.S. cutting the link between gold and currency (doing away with the gold standard) as well a major Russian wheat deal that wheeled in about \$700 million. Recognizing this lucrative period, farmers invested earnings back into their business by purchasing more land with greater debt. Things turned sour when interest rates rose and exports to the USSR were halted after the 1979 invasion in Afghanistan (2017b). Consequently, land dropped in value and the profits farmers were turning could not pay off their debt, thus many went out of business. A University of Iowa

study reported that more than 1,000 farmers across the United States took their own lives as their farms were lost due to foreclosure (Snee, 2017). Unfortunately, these rates have remained stubbornly high, especially, in contrast to other occupational industries.

A Deadly Topic Without Much Attention

Examining the available literature, there has been one study similar to this research idea which was published in the Australian Journal of Rural Health in 2017. This study sought to assess the differences between farming and non-farming rural adults, both with perceived barriers to mental health service use. Lead researcher, Melissa Hull, spoke to the main goal of the study, “what we really wanted to pin down with the study was, do farmers have a really different set of values and circumstances that might put up barriers to getting help when they need it” (Aish, 2017). Approximately 78 non-farmers and 45 farmers were recruited in South Australia to participate in a computer-assisted telephone survey. Results showed that the “need for control and self-reliance” was a stronger barrier when seeking mental health service use than it was for non-farmers. Farmers also indicated that “I find it difficult to understand my doctor/health professional” compared with non-farmers; this “implies that there may be a disconnect between how some health professionals communicate with farmers and what farmers find comfortable” (Aish, 2017). Conclusions drawn from this study said, “long-held stereotypes of stoicism and self-reliance among farmers were somewhat supported, in the context of mental health” (Hull, 2017). Hull’s major push from this study was to get policy-makers to “explore how best to develop proactive health decision-making in this vulnerable population” (Aish, 2017).

Occupational Hazard

In 2016, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) found that those in the agricultural industry—farmers, farm laborers, ranchers, fishers and lumber harvesters—commit suicide at a higher rate than any other occupation. “The U.S. farmer suicide crisis echoes a much larger farmer suicide crisis happening globally: An Australian farmer dies by suicides every four days; in the UK, one farmer a week takes his or her own life; France, one farmer dies by suicide every two days; in India, more than 270,000 farmers have died by suicide since 1995.” (Weingarten, 2017).

Agricultural workers commit suicide at five times the rate of any other occupational industry. Coming in second are military veterans, but the rate of agricultural worker suicide is still double that of veterans (Adams, 2017). Unfortunately, not a lot of support has been garnered for federally funded mental health programs for farmers the way it has been for military veterans. Longtime farmer psychologist Michael Rossman says, “I think there is a perception among many people in the U.S. that agriculture is kind of a fat cow in the federal budget. But the money that goes into the USDA doesn’t go for health prevention or health issues except through some loans. There is nothing that is put into developing a national, coordinated network like the veterans have” (Kutner, 2016). However, national efforts have improved in recent years. The National Farm Union established the “Farm Crisis Center” that hosts a national hotline.

A study conducted by the University of Iowa College of Public Health and published in the Journal of Rural Health examined trends of occupational suicide and homicide in farmers and

agriculture workers in the U.S. from 1992-2010. They found that during this 19-year span, 171 farmer operators/workers died from homicide while 230 died from suicide. “Suicide rates for farm operators/workers ranged from 0.36/100,000 to 0.95/100,000 over the study period; these rates are higher than suicide rates for all occupations (0.13/100,000-0.19/100,000)” (Ringgenberg, 2017). Results also showed that geographically speaking, the Midwest region of the U.S. ranked second (37.4%) behind the West (43.0%) in highest proportion of farmer suicide. Additionally, suicide victims were predominately white (97.4%), over 35 years of age (82%), self-employed (65.2%), and working primarily in businesses with fewer than 10 employees (64.3%) (Ringgenberg, 2017).

These results are incredibly concerning figuring the general population of Minnesota farmers fits within these exact demographics.

Stress Toll of Unpredictable Factors

While farmers have an incredible tolerance for adversity, a number of factors can weigh on farmers over time and exacerbate stress to unhealthy levels. Financial fluctuations, social isolation and poor access to mental health care services are all variable exposures that pose risk of suicide.

The most recent issue of *The Farmer* had bleak findings to report on the net worth of farmers in the past year. For the fifth consecutive year of thin profit, dairy farmers, in particular, faced some of the worst financial challenges as the price of milk plunged in the latter half of 2017, a trend that’s continuing into 2018. For example, Kevin Stuedemann, a dairy farmer in Belle Plaine, MN was dumping out milk for two months and selling his organic milk for less

than half its worth at conventional prices. “It was a terrible time. There was a lot of anxiety, and you wonder why this is happening to me. I had two months of throwing away milk, and I couldn’t continue to do that” (Meersman, 2017). An ag economists from UMN Extension describes this crisis as a “slow bleed” for farmers who came into the past five years with strong balance sheets. Even farm operations with a high level of financial security are feeling the pinch as they attempt to withstand this downturn. “For the third consecutive year, Minnesota farmers produced bumper crops of Minnesota’s primary cash crops, corn and soybeans. However, as has been the case each year, high yields did not produce high profit. The median crop farm earned \$23,722 down from \$46,831 in 2016” (U-M Extension, 2018). “Many [farmers] have done their best to cut costs, rebalance debt and stretch out loan payments, but they have also burned through savings and are running on empty” (Meersman, 2017).

While rural community growth lags behind that of urban areas, social isolation begins to become an issue for those living in greater Minnesota. One farmer laments that years ago, people knew their neighbors well and saw each other at church. Their kids attended the same schools and knew of one another. “That sense of community—physically, spiritually and culturally—has sort of gone out the door” (Zito, 2017). Ted Matthews, a well-known farm counselor in Minnesota has been in the business for decades. He has noticed a similar societal change that has shifted the way farmers work. Working alone now more than ever, farmers tend to report feeling more isolated. Nowadays, there just isn’t ample time for family members, neighbors and other community members to get to know each other and talk. “Back in the day, a family, if you said, ‘Do you eat all your meals together? They’d look at you, like, ‘Of course we do. What else would we do? Now, it’s rare that a farm family eats all three of their meals together. It’s very

rare” (Collins, 2018). Feeling alone without anyone to turn to in times of stress intensifies the feeling of anxiety and depression that only accelerates the downward spiral of hopelessness.

It’s no new revelation in the public health world that rural areas are lacking quality and convenient healthcare. Shortages are seen across family practice physicians, specialists, dentists and especially mental health practitioners. “Anyone living and working in rural areas who seek mental health services face two giant obstacles: availability and accessibility”, says the National Rural Health Association (Ripon Advance News Service, 2018). Last year, the Center for Rural Policy and Development put out a report about the shortage of mental health services in Greater Minnesota. While improvements have been made in recent years with increased funding, studies by two state task forces and community efforts, the larger, statewide issue remains and mental health services continue to be inconsistent in availability and not robust enough to meet the demand (Mental health services in Greater Minnesota, 2017). The strategy being employed by Minnesota is to address mental health based on region (16 regions based on population densities and county lines). While this technically covers the swath of the state, no one region meets demand for every service and almost all are lacking at least one critical service (i.e. outpatient; in-home; inpatient; screening; school programs; crisis treatment; supportive services for housing, employment, or ongoing therapy, etc.). The problem in rural areas is the lack of people which doesn’t equip providers who would treat mental illness with a viable business model. “Sparse populations, the stigma of mental illness, long distances between communities and the resulting transportation difficulties in rural areas all contribute to fewer people seeking treatment. Fewer patients mean fewer services provided and therefore fewer reimbursements from insurance

companies and Medicaid, leading to less revenue overall and less money to provide a full array of services” (Mental health services in Greater Minnesota, 2017).

Innate Mentality and Identity

Pride is a uniting characteristic all farmers possess. Pride can come from their healthy livestock, their high-yield crop, to the expansive acres of land they own and to the legacy and reputation they’ve built over the years. “Farming is a great life. There is nothing better than putting a seed into the ground and watching it mature” (Davis, 2017). On the flipside, losing ownership or downsizing a family farm is a failure of epic proportions both professionally and personally. It’s opposite of prideful, it’s shameful. “Ownership of a family farm is the triumphant result of the struggles of multiple generations. Losing the family farm is the ultimate loss bringing shame to the generation that has let down their forebears and dashed their hopes for successors” (A few minutes with Rosmannn, 2018). “A lot of farmers have never done anything else, and they truly don’t believe that there’s life outside farming. Dairy farmers work seven days a week and if they lose the dairy, they lose themselves. They lose who they are” (Meersman, 2017). It all goes back into their farm that has been in their family for generations. It’s not work or just a job for them, it’s their chosen way of life. There’s no separation from the farm and who they feel they are.

Combine this with the general personality and attitude of farmers which is very much go-at-it-alone, self-reliant and “rub some dirt in it.” Unfortunately, the misconception of agricultural work is similar to the misconception of a farmer. “The romantic public perception of farmers hasn’t caught up with the modern realities of their jobs. A lot of people think of farmers

as being these low-key guys. The truth is, farmers have one of the most stressful jobs on the planet. There's no time they're not stressed" (Collins, 2018). Farmers are the ones to suffer in silence, they're reluctant to ask for help, but always willing to give it to others, which is an interesting paradox in itself. One article points out that the cultural factor of "traditional masculinity" has a role in farmer suicide. "Traditional masculinity" refers to the attributes of self-reliance, individualism and stoicism which serves as a barrier in seeking mental health help. "Farmers are a unique breed of people. They like to keep everything to themselves. It gets so that it starts eating at them over and over again. That sets up a farmer as his worst enemy, in a way" (Collins, 2018).

Minnesota Leading the Way in Addressing The Issue

The state of Minnesota has taken a number of proactive measures in wake of this public health crisis. In fall of 2017, the Minnesota Department of Agriculture launched a free, confidential, 24/7 hotline available to Minnesota farmers and rural residents. MDA Commissioner Dave Frederickson fully supports the service and even brings up his own experience. "I farmed for 24 years, so I am no stranger to the stress and worry that can be part of farming. I know that sometimes it helps to talk to someone about problems that can seem insurmountable. There is always help available around the corner" (Yust, 2017). While the crisis line is in high demand, ongoing funding has been an issue. Recognizing the hotline's importance, the Minnesota Department of Health put forward temporary funds to tide it over until a long-term solution was identified. "With Minnesota facing historically high suicide rates and an opioid addiction epidemic, we were concerned about losing this life-saving resource that serves

tens of thousands of Minnesotans every year,” said Minnesota Health Commissioner Dr. Ed Ehlinger. “This is not a permanent fix, but it will keep the suicide prevention line open for people in crisis and provide time to find a lasting solution” (Steck, 2017).

Another Minnesota Department of Agriculture service to address farmer mental health was a six-week workshop series held this past winter throughout parts of rural Minnesota that “aimed at educating farmers’ families and friends as well as law enforcement, about farmers and mental health” (Pross, 2018). “The ‘Down on the Farm’ sessions, sponsored by the University of Minnesota Extension, will teach people in farming communities to recognize the warning signs of mental and emotional distress and provide information about resources that are available to farmers.” Half-day workshops were held in Willmar, Austin, Mankato, Grand Rapids and Thief River Falls throughout February and March.

Additionally, Tom Emmer, U.S. Representative for Minnesota’s 6th congressional district, is fighting hard in the House of Representatives to move the Stemming the Tide of Rural Economic Stress and Suicide (STRESS) act forward. The STRESS act is a part of the Agriculture and Nutrition Act of 2018 or more commonly referred to as the Farm Bill. “Farmers in Minnesota and across the country need the reforms in the farm bill: improvements for dairy risk management, protections for crop insurance, investments to combat livestock epidemics, and his [Tom Emmer’s] legislation to provide more mental health resources for farmers, ranchers and other agriculture workers who suffer high rates of depression and suicide” (Rao, 2018). On May 16, Emmer urged members of Congress to take action— “In my home state of Minnesota, agriculture is one of the main drivers of our economy. And right now, farmers, ranchers, and agricultural workers across the country are looking to Congress for a strong Farm Bill that

improves the farm safety net and brings certainty to producers in uncertain times. Because life on the farm isn't what it used to be. Today, farmers are suffering from some of the worst rates of suicide in the country. General social isolation, downturn of the market, low farm income, regulatory strains, and a lack of treatment options all make it hard for farmers to get the help they need. That's why I introduced the STRESS Act to boost resources specifically for farmer's mental health. With the support of Chairman Conaway and the House Agriculture Committee, I'm proud to see it included in this year's Farm Bill. Our farmers who feed the world, are feeling the weight of the world on their shoulders. It's time we get them the help and care they deserve" (Emmer, 2018).

METHOD

This research project utilizes qualitative interviews to better understand beliefs of farmers from farmers themselves, family members, those in the agricultural industry and the health professionals that serve agricultural communities. Prior to interviewing, University of Minnesota Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved several documents pertaining to this study including the recruiting materials, consent form, protocol form and interview questionnaire.

21 professionals were contacted to participate in an interview. The interviewees were sourced through hometown connections to rural New London-Spicer, through the researcher's father who works as an agronomist at Pioneer-Dupont Seed and graduate school classmate connections. All 17 total interviewees live and work within the state of Minnesota. Gender skewed toward male as agricultural work is predominantly male dominated. A total of three

females were interviewed and there was one female representation in each of the three interview categories. Age of interview participants ranged from 28 to mid-late sixties.

The interview questionnaire instrument used in this study was based off of a previous interview questionnaire created and used by Dr. Rebekah Nagler in a different study. With her helpful guidance, questions were adapted to fit the topic and audience for this specific research project.

Seven of the interviewees classified themselves as farm owner/operator or agricultural grower. Additional interviewees classified themselves as farmers, but their main focus was a different occupation in the agricultural industry, most often a seed salesperson or agronomist. In these cases, those interviewees were categorized as “agricultural professionals” even though they did farm on the side. Through this study, it was interesting to note how agricultural professionals often own and operate farms in their spare time. Seven interviewees were classified as agricultural professionals. Three interviewees were categorized as health professionals holding the titles of Physician’s Assistant and Licensed Social Worker.

The interviews were conducted from June 7, 2018 to June 27, 2018. Each interview lasted approximately 20-40 minutes, two of which were in-person while the other 15 were conducted over the phone. The interviews were based on a semi-structured set of interview questions (see Appendix 1). The questions focused on several domains:

general background: how one got into the agricultural industry or started working with farmers, proudest career moment as it relates to farmers/farming, etc.;

advantages and disadvantages of a farmer seeking help for a mental health issue (behavioral/attitudinal);

individuals or groups that existed who would support or not support a farmer seeking help for a mental health issue (normative); factors, circumstances or settings that would enable or prevent a farmer seeking help for a mental health issue (efficacy/control); and, a couple of open-ended questions to capture relevant thoughts outside of the specific questions.

Transcripts of the interviews (see Appendix 2) have been stripped of any identifiable names to provide the interviewees with anonymity. This allowed for the communicators to speak freely about farmers experiencing mental health problems, farmer beliefs about mental health and the general issue of the current farmer suicide epidemic. The transcripts were then analyzed for patterns and themes. Specifically, answers to each of the questions across all interviewees were grouped together. Repeated ideas, themes and phrases were tabulated and the ideas with the highest number of mentions were pulled out as significant findings. The common mentions cemented the researcher's feeling of message saturation. About halfway through the interviews, similar, predictable responses were being recorded without a lot of new information. The findings and examination of the research questions provide the basis for the research project's farmer mental health communications recommendations.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The findings of this research project summarize the major themes and commonalities interview participants cited. Through the series of interviewees, response saturation began to occur by continual similar responses to questions. Those ideas are summarized below as

maintaining quality of life; farmer identity; removing the feeling of isolation; the role stigma plays in rural communities; financial constraints; the need for confidentiality; and finally, the recognition that improving farmer mental health is a complicated, multi-faceted issue.

Anything to maintain quality of life

When asked what the advantages would be to a farmer if he/she sought help for a mental health issue, quality of life was often the first thing uttered across each of the three interviewee groups. The ability to maintain one's lifestyle by enjoying work and personal life was of great importance.

"The ability to keep doing what they love. Mentally, it can be very challenging right now to continue to operate your farm. Cash flow right now, expenses are high. Profits make it hard to break even. It can drain a person. Without seeking help within a month, farmers could get burned out. Mental issues can make farmers physically not do their work. Some farmers are mentally exhausted and they can't do their work."

"A farmer needs to be in the best shape to perform their tasks."

"It will allow them to enjoy their work and personal life more."

"The main thing is that he'll be able to work through and live to farm another day. I know several farmers in my career that did not ask for help and a couple of them sat at the edge of their field and killed themselves. It just got to the point that they could not bear to tell someone that they had this issue. They made a permanent solution to a temporary mental health issue."

"...it will help the individual get through some difficult times if they seek help. Whether they're battling depression or some other mental health issues. The more mentally healthy you are, the better you'll be in any occupation, including farming."

"I think it would help them get through the tough time, the mental issues that they're dealing with."

"I think if they actually seek help, it could save relationships. It could save farms. It could save lives. Depression can lead to suicide which obviously upends everything. Life loss, relationship loss, then potential for whole operation to crumble or dissolve."

The stress toll of unpredictable commodity prices, ever-changing weather patterns, equipment breakdowns and other unforeseen costs can wreak havoc on a person. Couple that with day in and day out physical weariness of manual labor, consistent lack of sleep, general isolation and the societal pressure to remain tough and stoic is a recipe for mental health disaster.

Farmer identity intertwined with chosen profession

As learned in the literature review, the series of interviews confirmed the idea that all farmers are extremely strong, prideful, independent. While each of these characteristics is needed to weather the stress of the occupation, it makes asking for help nearly impossible, even with family, livelihood and literal life on the line.

An unquestionable fear of farmers is appearing weak or admitting defeat which equates to weakness:

“I think farmers, and people in every profession, really define themselves on what they do; it’s their life. There’s that certain window of time you need to capitalize on and get them help before they go into utter despair and it’s harder for them to come “back” so to say. Get them where they’re still thinking rationally.”

“Seeking help is still seen as a weakness. That’s the barrier.”

“No farmer wants to feel weak or vulnerable. To feel defeated, like it was something they weren’t able to do themselves.”

“Lots of time, farmers can’t talk to their parents about it because they’re so embarrassed and that their a failure. They fear of letting their parents down because that would mean letting their family farm down which has been around for generations.”

“Perception-wise, a lot of farmers are somewhat conservative, very independent minded and don’t want to air their own perceived weaknesses. They dislike that, it’s really hard for them. They will not share easily. They’ve grown up to work hard, be independent, not asking for handouts, not asking for them. They’re worried that other people will think less of them.”

“They think you solve it on your own. They think of it as a sign of weakness. They don’t see it as an imbalance of brain chemistry. People think they’re crazy, they’re not crazy, there’s just an imbalance going on. It’s kind of a foreign concept.”

“If someone found out, they may think that person is weak. Farmers don’t want to act weak, they’re tough. They want to conceal weakness.”

Growing up with strapped budgets in remote locations, farmers had no choice, but to become handy. They’re able to repair their farm equipment, cars, house, sheds and everything in between. To them, not being able to “fix” their thoughts or mental health struggles is a concept in which they can’t resonate. So fiercely independent, asking someone for help when they are usually the ones being asked, is the full realization of failure.

“There’s a lot of macho men who think you’re weak because you’re going into therapy, suck it up, tough it out, move on, shut up, I don’t want to hear about it. It’s a male dominated industry anyway. Gets into the locker room mentality. Tough guys are independent.”

“It’s the culture of the ag community, very independent. They fix stuff on their own, survive on their own.”

“Culturally, we’re very dependent on ourselves. We’re fairly self-motivating because we have to plan so far ahead. So much takes planning and forethought. We’re self-reliant and proud. And we fix everything. Farmers want to fix themselves so that’s an impediment.”

“Farmers are tough. Most farmers do everything themselves, they can handle it; they don’t want help.”

“You’re fiercely independent if you’re a farmer. You’re motivated to work 24/7/365.”

“I hate to lump farmers in a group, but there’s a lot of pride, self-reliance. Their used to problem solving and they can fix it. They’re used to fixing their own problems. As a group, they don’t seek outside help, unless a dire situation.”

“Their work is more than just their work. It’s their life, it’s how they identify themselves.”

Remove feeling of isolation

Across all three groups, the notion of realizing you’re not the only one struggling seems to be comforting. As one respondent put it, “a problem shared is a problem relieved.”

Normalizing your thoughts and issues by learning others have gone through and are going through the same things may bring feelings of peace. Finding out you're not alone can bring great comfort, especially in the literal remoteness of rural areas and the figurative loneliness accompanying mental health problems.

"Sometimes you end up letting down your guard and someone says, 'hey that's happened to me too.' It's not as forbidden as people make it out to be. They usually find out later that this usually happens later on."

"Everybody has scars. They'll heal over and sometimes you scratch it and they'll open up. Then they'll heal and they don't bother as much later on."

"Maybe they can understand that their not the only ones that are dealing with stuff like that. If they could talk to someone about it, they could understand that it's not just them."

"If they really sought help and told people, they would find many of their neighbors and friends have had similar circumstances and could gain support."

"The person themselves needs to know that there is help out there. You don't have to carry that load alone."

"A sense of not feeling alone or like the only one struggling with this problem."

Stigma is exacerbated in rural farm communities

Stigma associated with mental health and subsequent treatment is not a new phenomenon. However, it is exacerbated in small towns in Minnesota due to a variety of factors: rumor mill that exists in small communities, the general conservative nature of residents and the more antiquated ways of thinking about outside help for a health ailment that isn't overtly visible. However, while stigma was one of the most common ideas mentioned, not a single person interviewed thought that anyone in their right mind would outwardly discourage or disapprove of a farmer seeking help for a mental health issue. All interviewees were personally

supportive and many had a difficult time thinking of individuals or groups who might be disapproving. What was most apparent was that farmers would stigmatize themselves for seeking help. They wouldn't judge another for seeking help, but they would look down upon themselves for the same behavior.

"All were supportive and open to treatment, but recognized the stigma is there."

"Mental health carries a stigma. If you have hemorrhoids, you go in and treat it. You don't want to advertise it in the church bulletin, but there's no stigma attached to it like mental health treatment."

"Admitting that you possibly have a problem because there's a social stigma attached to mental health issues. You're standing in your community and peer circle maybe is at risk. The stigma around mental health has always been different than a physical ailment. Walking around with a cast or crutches, people can identify there is a problem. When it's in someone's mind, it's not always evident."

"It's a stigma thing. They're worried about someone else figuring them out. If I'm seeing a counselor, someone will think I'm crazy. I'm not right for farming, farming isn't not right for me. I'm failing my legacy of the family farm. Seeing a counselor is the admission of this isn't working or the beginning of the end."

"You know how society is. People talk and gossip and look at mental health issues as less than positive."

"Stigma, for sure. They're afraid that people will hear that they had to go see the therapist. I teach them to say those things; let's give [name not mentioned for privacy purposes] a call. It's not [name not mentioned for privacy purposes] the therapist. It's not [name not mentioned for privacy purposes] the mental health person. Mental health = mental illness. I'm not crazy, why are you calling me mentally ill? That stigma becomes a really important factor when dealing with farmers."

"It's starting to be more acceptable. It's an OK thing to seek help for. It's not like it was 20 years ago even. As a whole society, they're more accepting and encouraging. I think the world is moving that way even though stigma still exists."

"I think that's still very much a stereotype to be a farmer, I would err more in the livestock farm that there's a macho man who can't ask for help. You have to be tough and gruff, but that's not what farmer is anymore."

"They don't want word getting out to their neighbors that they're having issues. They want to be strong, reliable. They want to make a living. It's a cultural thing."

“Money talks”

Lower commodity prices, increasing operating costs and high premium/high deductible individual health plans make money a factor when considering to seek medical assistance for a mental health concern. An unknown copay or potentially full out-of-pocket cost of seeing a doctor or therapist (likely more than once) makes a farmer hesitant to seek help.

“Financial help. If they are dealing with financial problems or cost of the help. Individual insurance which most farmers have is pretty expensive.”

“A lot of farm people have individual health insurance and it’s very expensive. Many instances, spouses don’t work outside the farm so they’re not on commercial insurance. The ship is sinking already, how do I justify spending more money on treatment? Money talks.”

“I think a lot of farmers have insurance concerns. If they’re going in for counseling, some of that stuff is expensive. A lot of time they’re self-insured. There’s huge deductibles, copays. Already when you’re under financial stress, that’s another stressor. There again people have to look beyond and see the bigger picture here. They’re sacrificing, they don’t see the big picture. \$2,000 vs. suicide or loss of the farm. They don’t see the big picture. Spend a little bit now and it’ll be a huge pay off.”

“The lack of consistency in healthcare coverage for independent business is a huge stress. So many of our neighbors’ premiums have shot up. There’s so much anxiety around this. There’s such a lack of consistency. My parents in the last 4 years have had 5 different insurance plans because they’ve been dropped. The insurance is an added stress. Having a spouse off the farm to bring in insurance is huge. If you don’t have that, it’s a huge headache. That is definitely a barrier.”

“Cost. Worried about healthcare. A lot of time they’re individually-covered and it can be expensive. Esp. the first visit with a provider, they’re ringing the register. Sometimes, you may not feel you’re getting value out of it.”

“Money is key. It’s the unknown: weather, prices, selling, it’s so stressful. More people are struggling with this.”

“Their wives are working elsewhere just to get some health insurance. It’s so expensive. Blue Cross Blue Shield dropped all of their individual accounts and one of my friend’s with cancer has to pay for his treatment out-of-pocket. That’s a disaster, a big item out here in rural America.”

Confidentiality is key

Confidentiality relates back to stigma and the rumor mill that exists in small towns where everyone knows everyone. Word getting out to friends and neighbors would mean a drop in the social hierarchy and open a farmer up as a target for judgement, teasing and worst of all, not being thought of as tough, reliable or stable.

“The nature of the business. It’s held very tightly. Huge capital base, but very small earning potential. Sometimes debt and the feelings of failing the family or not making the farm run. People want to keep that stuff private.”

“Confidentiality is very important. Doctors are confidential, hypothetically. Legal people, hypothetically. Clergy is confidential. Even teachers have a level of confidential responsibility.”

“It’s O.K. to talk to their pastor or clergy members; it’s easier to hide it at church than at a clinic. Someone could recognize their car at the clinic.”

“If a farmer did seek help, they wouldn’t tell anyone. They would feel like they’ve been defeated or they lost. It wouldn’t be known to the public by any means. Not even their friend group.”

“It would have to be confidential. You’d have to advertise the program discreetly. They’re not going to want to have others know that their seeking mental health.”

“It’s likely going to be pretty private. It’s not likely going to be shown the light of day. They won’t ever show up for small groups and talk about it. I don’t know how you get passed that stigma.”

“They confide privately or don’t confide at all.”

Complicated, multi-faceted issue

All three interviewee groups mentioned a host of factors weighing into the decision of a farmer contemplating whether or not to seek help for a mental health condition. Some outrightly stated that it’s a complicated, multifactorial matter that isn’t going to be fixed in one fell swoop.

Not only is the natural identity/personality of a farmer, fear of stigma, lack of confidentiality and money hang ups all existing issues, but many of the ag professionals and farmers + family members mentioned the issue of time. Time away from the farm, to do anything, is money out of your bottom line. Time taken to drive to, attend an appointment and then drive home all comes at a cost.

“There’s a lot of reasons we don’t do a lot of stuff because it’s like a half hour to go get something. We don’t go out to eat so often because it takes a long time to go there and come back.”

“The time it takes cause we’re all so busy.”

“It takes time.”

Access, both in geographic distance and shortage of providers, is a well-known public health problem. Oftentimes, people living in rural areas are forced to drive 20, 30, 40 or 50+ miles to receive care. This is expensive and also contributes to the time issue. Additionally, as found in the literature review, there is a shortage of medical providers, especially in mental health. This increases wait time for someone to see a particular provider which could make health matters worse or simply discourage those in rural areas from seeking help in the first place.

“In Minnesota we need more rural providers. If I put somebody in counseling, it’s a 3 month wait, unless they’re in severe crisis. I see people travel 30-40 miles to come see me. Location of services is huge and the time it takes to travel.”

“What would make it easier is coming to them – phone calls or telehealth.”

“Farmers have limited access to choices of mental health providers or they might be backed up. Usually when they need something, they need it pretty soon. You can’t wait on it. If there’s a waiting period for a health professional or see a big dollar sign, they’re going to blow it off.”

“The distance they have to go. If we were to seek mental health help out here, we’d have to drive to get it. At least an hour away, it takes a good part of the day.”

It wasn't brought up in the interviews widely, but the issue of farmers not knowing there are existing resources out there like crisis lines and workshops put on by University of Minnesota Extension was brought up by a few ag professionals.

"An ad campaign or local awareness of services that's available would be great so that they could realize I don't have to drive 100 miles to get help."

"Make farmers more aware vs. waiting for them to admit to a problem."

"Awareness. I'm wondering if companies like [company name] (direct contact with farmers - newsletters, blogs, tweets) and other ag companies could raise awareness of these crisis centers and resources available for people struggling. Even on social media. Maybe ag companies get the word out that there is help out there. It might make a difference with some people."

DISCUSSION

Tying it back to the purpose of this research process, these interviews set out to examine whether a communication campaign could help improve mental health among Minnesota farmers. The interview questionnaire contained questions to garner behavioral/attitudinal, normative and efficacy/control beliefs of farmers, and those around them, in regards to the behavior of seeking mental health treatment as a means to prevent suicide.

Examining the behavioral/attitudinal question responses by looking at mention counts, maintaining quality of life and farm operation as well as removing feelings of isolation or feeling like they are the only one struggling with this issue were noted as advantages to seeking help for a mental health issue. Pressure of social stigma was seen as a disadvantage to seeking help for a mental health issue. Moving to the normative question responses, this research found that quite a few individual or groups would support a farmer seeking help for a mental health issue. Not a single interviewee noted that a particular individual or group of people would judge a farmer for

seeking help for a mental health issue. They noted the general stigma that lies around mental health, but all respondents thought surrounding friends, family members and other agricultural professionals would support a farmer to seek improvement on his/her health. Only “stupid” and uneducated people that don’t matter would look down upon that help-seeking behavior. Lastly, the efficacy/control question responses showed that there are a number of barriers that would make it more difficult for a farmer to seek help for a mental health issue including lack of time, access (both geographic proximity and availability of providers) and financial/insurance constraints.

These findings give excellent recommendations for further research by way of a belief elicitation survey that would quantify these qualitative data and make clearer which set of beliefs is most crucial to address in a communication campaign through strategic messaging. Drawing premature conclusions from this research, multiple messages encompassing more than one set of beliefs would need to be used in order to resonate with farmers. As mentioned in the results, there is no clear “one and done” solution to encourage farmers to examine their mental health state and seek treatment, if necessary. It’s a matter of figuring out a way to address all three—behavioral/attitudinal, normative and efficacy/control—in the same campaign, not one in particular. For example, the same campaign may use a multitude of messages such as, “Keep your farm in your family. We can help. Visit [insert resource website],” or “Strong means admitting that you don’t know all the answers. We can help. Visit [insert resource website],” or “Free, confidential help from the cab of your tractor.” We can help. Call [insert resource phone number].” However, addressing all three types of beliefs would equate to an expensive campaign budget. A subsequent quantitative survey could isolate one of the belief types as being most

important that a communication campaign could realistically focus. The goal of having farmers more aware of their mental health and encouraging them to seek help is a complex issue and thus, an equally complex, comprehensive and multi-faceted communication campaign would need to be put in place.

KEY INSIGHTS

Seeing that there is opportunity to address some of farmers' held beliefs about mental health as a means to decrease the suicide rate, the following lists recommendations communicators should keep in mind when moving forward with quantitative research and subsequent campaign formation, testing and measurement.

1. Target spouses, wives, children and ag professionals who have consistent interaction with farmers as the campaign audience (ag loan lenders, tractor equipment reps, etc.)

The wives (typically) of farmers are very involved in the background functioning of the family farm. They are well-versed in the budget and financial expenditures. They are also in frequent contact with the farmer, have a pulse on their mental state and have the leverage to persuade the seeking of professional help. Additionally, farmers' children and ag professionals have frequent contact with the farmer and might be able to help a farmer should they find his or herself in a situation where they need to seek outside help.

“A lot of times it seems like the farmer's' wives would be the ones to get them help. It could be directed at the spouses, potentially children. It could be extremely beneficial... Wives generally run the behind-the-scenes on farms. They sign the checks and get things in order. They're very persuasive. They could try to get their husbands in. This could be huge.”

“The wife would be very strong on that. They would understand more the day to day and what’s really bothering them. She would have the strongest support. Doctors are fine, but they don’t know everything that’s happening.”

“The responsibility needs to be at the spousal level (wives), but there is still some sexism there. He’s the head of the house, she’s assisting him.”

2. Intertwine mental health discussions and resources within already-existing ag-related organizations, meetings and associations

It would be like pulling teeth if you expected a farmer to show up to a meeting or event that focused on mental health. Rather than creating programs that focus on the topic, weave in speakers and resources into already established gatherings. Farmers will show up under the guise of the larger event and will be a captive audience for periodic mental health material peppered throughout.

“It would almost have to be a sneak attack on them. Like, just for instance our John Deere salesman, does a lot just counselling. How’s it going? You going good? You and [name] getting along? You can’t just sit down and schedule an appointment, you have to do it in the moment. It’s too much of a prideful thing.”

“If they come to farm meetings (all the time), I’ll simply just be a piece of it. If they’re going to listen to an agronomist, whatever. And then they throw me in to talk about their mental health. Low-key, comfort level. They start seeing it as non-threatening so they can step forward. In working with all of these other agencies that have this comfort level with mental health, it’s easier for farmers to reach out.”

“Some of our farm organizations (Farm Bureau), they have made a great pivot. In any of the conferences or meetings that they have, they’ve put mental health at a forefront. Only 5% of membership shows up to those events. Also answering to the opioid crisis. At every meeting they have, they have pamphlets, they have anxiety brochures.”

“Basically, if you can hold a farm group setting in some type of ag setting or business, is probably the best because they just have a problem going to these so called consulting people or mental health professionals. Extension has done a pretty good job, or has tried with this model. If you set up this format of the meeting just on the mental health thing, that’s going to turn people away. If you have a meeting with various presentation topics and one is on mental health,

you're going to have a group there already that wouldn't show up otherwise. Make it a part of the conference, weave it in."

3. Capitalize on "down-time" while farmers are in the cabs of their tractors

During the course of the interviews for this research, farmers were in the thick of planting

This spring season got off to a slow start with late snow and lots of standing rain leftover. In order to fit the interview in with their busy schedules, some farmers requested it be held while they were in their tractor on the field. The technology is so advanced these days that farmers are able to type in specific GPS markers, hit a few buttons and they're off to the races with essentially a self-driving tractor. Farmers are along for the ride to manage any changes and to ensure the equipment is running as it should, but during these times, farmers are left with nothing but singing to the radio. It's a quiet, confidential, yet productive space for them to be in while they complete other tasks. Just as they were interviewed for 30 minutes in the cab of their tractor, they could easily have a mental health consult with a professional while winding up and down their plots.

"If there was a tool like that, a survey that allows people to talk, not in person, that could open the door."

"Maybe a hotline or calling thing they could do while sitting in the tractor. Do it more confidentiality in the cab alone. Times are really busy so it's hard to up and go into town. While they're clicking a GPS and sitting there."

4. Offer some sort of free, introductory call to “test out” mental health services or provider without putting money on the line

No one wants to put themselves out on a limb only to learn they didn't get much out of the experience and on top of that have to settle a bill. As with anyone, farmers would appreciate the opportunity to test the waters of mental health help without the financial obligation. Even if it's merely to find the right fit in terms of provider personality. In order to divulge deep feelings, there needs to be a great level of trust. If farmers had the opportunity to “try before you buy,” they might be more willing to give it a shot. If it's not a doctor, perhaps, there is a way to create a farmer peer support network much like the model used by veterans affairs for those military personnel that return home with PTSD. Having a like-minded person who has been in your shoes occupation-wise and gone through similar mental health struggles could be seen as valuable to farmers.

“Having a hard time finding someone to talk to. Less likely to keep digging to find someone.”

“Counselors are bunch of quacks. They've got no understanding of what farming is and they learned something in a damn book some place in a college course and they have a damn degree. That's the frustration I hear from farm people. You just don't see farmers calling for help.”

“Not feeling that they can talk to qualified people that can fully understand the situation. I always say, if you haven't been there and done it, you don't understand.”

“Do they click with the “mental health professional?” You get some so-called people that are supposed to help you and if you don't feel comfortable, you don't want to be there. Don't want to force it. Nobody likes being forced into stuff. You need to find someone with some level of similar type of loss that I could relate to, that I could trust. Some were my coworkers, some were my friends. Initially, it's really hard for people to find someone to talk to that won't break their bank. Talking to a loser is going to ruin someone's appetite for people to reach out.”

“Low or no cost access early on. Getting them in the door is just a bitch. You see these movies where people take a long time to break down.”

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH CONSIDERATIONS

Because of the nature of qualitative interviews, there are limitations to this research project. While the interviews are helpful in gaining a depth of understanding of the topic, the qualitative nature of the research method limits the ability of any findings to be applied generally across a wide audience. 17 people were interviewed across three different ag-related occupations, but that number is not statistically valid. In order to address this issue, future research would need to utilize quantitative methods, such as a survey, to build a large enough study sample to identify key intention data and apply findings more broadly.

The research in this project relied heavily on word-of-mouth and existing relationships through family members and friends. The lead researcher of this study had personal relationships and prior contact to the majority of interviewees so personal bias is present. However, one could argue that the research participants were more willing to share their candid thoughts on the issue because of a personal relationship and trust of the researcher. The lead researcher fully admits to having a personal stake in this project as she has a deep desire to help those in rural communities. Researcher bias was also a factor when deciding who to reach out to for interviewing as she generally called on folks that she had met prior to the study.

While interview participants represented a healthy swath of Minnesota—central, west central, west, northwestern and southwestern regions, a comprehensive statewide and nationwide study would eliminate any state or regional biases underlying this research. Various parts of Minnesota and individual states themselves think and believe differently so having a cross-section of locations in and out of state could eliminate any possibility of cultural influences affecting the research outcomes. Additionally, diversity in farm type could lend the research to

different participant responses. This study communicated with mostly crop farmers, specifically corn, soybeans and sugarbeets. Two individuals were involved in hog farming and one had experience working on a dairy farm. Increasing the number of hog and dairy farmers along with different crops could be something to consider for future research.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Interview Questionnaire

Demographic/introductory questions

1. What is your occupation/official title?
2. What city are you from?
3. How many years have you been in the agriculture industry?
4. How did you get into the industry?
5. What are you most proud of when examining your career thus far and how it relates to farmers (or farming)?

Belief questions

6. What do you see as the advantages of a farmer seeking help for a mental health issue in the next [1 month, 3 months, 12 months]? What are the good things that might happen to *you* (or *a farmer you know*) if you (or he/she) sought help for a mental health issue?
7. What do you see as the disadvantages of a farmer seeking help for a mental health issue in the next [1 month, 3 months, 12 months]? What are the bad things that might happen to *you* (or *a farmer you know*) if you (or he/she) sought help for a mental health issue?
8. Please think of individuals or groups who would approve or think that you (or a farmer you know) should seek help for a mental health issue in the next [1 month, 3 months, 12 months]. For example, it could be your spouse, your father/mother, your children, your brother/sister/other relatives, your best friend, your neighbor, your pastor/priest, your church group or bible study, your doctor, your employer, etc.

9. Please think of individuals or groups who would disapprove of you (or a farmer you know) seeking help for a mental health issue in the next [1 month, 3 months, 12 months].
For example, it could be your spouse, your father/mother, your children, your brother/sister/other relatives, your best friend, your neighbor, your pastor/priest, your church group or bible study, your doctor, your employer, etc.
10. Are there any other individuals or groups who come to mind when you think about *you* (or *a farmer you know*) seeking help for a mental health issue in the next [1 month, 3 months, 12 months]? (For example, your immediate friend group, other parents who attend your kids' school, ag loan lender, seed sales rep, etc.)
11. What factors, circumstances or settings might enable or make it easier for you (or a farmer you know) to seek help for a mental health issue in the next [1 month, 3 months, 12 months]?
12. What factors, circumstances, or settings would make it difficult or prevent you (or a farmer you know) from seeking help for a mental health issue in the next [1 month, 3 months, 12 months]?
13. Is there anything else that you associate with *you* (or *a farmer you know*) seeking help for a mental health issue in the next [1 month, 3 months, 12 months]?

Closing question

14. Is there anything else you'd like to add or feel that I've missed?

Appendix 2 – Interview Transcript

What do you see as the advantages of a farmer seeking help for a mental health issue in the next [1 month, 3 months, 12 months]? What are the good things that might happen to <i>you</i> (or <i>a farmer you know</i>) if you (or he/she) sought help for a mental health issue?	
R1	No brainer. Better to talk about it and say, this isn't working, what do you want to do different. Maybe just medications and diversions. Simplistically, that's a good thing.
R2	Quality of life. Decreased stress. A sense of not feeling alone or like the only one struggling with this problem.
R3	<p>One of the fallacies that people have is that the crisis right now is the # of suicides on farms. Most people think it's commodity prices on farms. It's a factor, but not the only one. Stress is always there, it's on every farm. An operating loan is a stressor. Once you get that then it's the weather. Then they get the crop in and they're worried about aphids and rain. On and on and on through the whole summer. Even if it's a good year, even if it's a growth year, they're still stressed. They don't know if they made a profit. Even if they do make a profit, they have to start the process all over again. There's no way to eliminate stress. It's more of can you handle it better and focus on the things you can control and worry less about the things you can't.</p> <p>Additionally, stigma is huge. There's a reason I wear jeans/golf shirts when I work with farmers. How can we lower our stress? We can't eliminate it. There's no such thing. I like to equate it sort of in a cup. Our emotions, as long as we're in control of our life, it doesn't overflow. But one more thing, it overflows, then it's everything. Commodity prices is a huge factor, but the idea that it's the only factor is just simply not true.</p>
R4	<p>Well, I don't know. Some people probably know they have a problem. Some people may not understand it because it's a chemical change in their body. They need to communicate with a spouse, a friend, clergy, anyone. It probably makes a lot of difference geographically where people are. Willmar has resources, but farmers in western MN may not have local help. With the internet, you can get help probably within a minute. There's farm crisis centers within our state and nationally. There's help out there. The average age of a farm is 57 yrs. Demographically, those guys don't have ipads, don't use laptops. They may not be in the loop on what kind of help is available. A 35 yr old farmer lives with their iPhones, ipads and can get help within a moment's notice. The older ones do not. Family members look for signals if they're not coping with life or if they've changed. Giving some signals that aren't normal, need to be in tune to that. The person themselves needs to know that there is help out there. You don't have to carry that load alone.</p>
R5	The main thing is that he'll be able to work through and live to farm another day. I know several farmers in my career that did not ask for help and a couple of them sat at the edge of their field and killed themselves. It just got to the point that they could not

	<p>bear to tell someone that they had this issue. It was a short-term mental issue, but they made a permanent solution to a temporary issue. One in 1976 and one during the farm crisis of the 1980's. In the late 1990's attempted and failed. When he was found, he admitted what his problems were and he had overleveraged the farm and was going to lose it.</p> <p>That kind of an attitude has gone on forever. Most of them will not seek help or guidance. They're really independent and they have a lot of personal pride in what they've done and what their family has done. Many are second, third, fourth generations. An 86-year old brought me out to the farm he bought in the 80's. From here I can see where our family farm had been; I had lost that farm. Before my dad died, he said Jim don't lose the farm. I've been very successful, I've had a great career, but to this day, I feel like a failure. They carry their baggage much longer than they should.</p>
R6	<p>Good things if they're having issues is that they're not holding it inside and thinking they can just deal with it. Maybe they can understand that their not the only ones that are dealing with stuff like that. Mainly, just being able to not make rational decisions off of the way that they're feeling. If they could talk to someone about it, they could understand that it's not just them.</p>
R7	<p>It will allow them to enjoy their work and personal life more. It would allow them to understand other people have similar concerns or problems to overcome. Everyone has stresses; a lot of times they're common. A problem shared is usually a problem relieved. They might be able to figure out methods to relieve their stressors.</p>
R8	<p>The ability to keep doing what they love. Mentally, it can be very challenging right now to continue operate your farm. Cash flow right now, expenses are high. Profits make it hard to break even. It can drain a person. Without seeking help within a month, farmers could get burned out. Mental issues can make farmers physically not do their work. Some farmers are mentally exhausted and they can't do their work. Some are thinking of retiring early because they just can't make money. They don't know how to get out. For someone to help sort through their thoughts would be extremely helpful. Peace of mind would be the good things. They work so hard that they don't deserve to be mentally exhausted. Help them accomplish their daily tasks that use to be done w ease that are now emotionally draining to them.</p>
R9	<p>I don't see any advantages. Farmers are too proud to admit that there's a problem because they feel like they failed. Counselors are bunch of quacks. They've got no understanding of what farming is and they learned something in a damn book some place in a college course and they have a damn degree. That's the frustration I hear I from farm people. You just don't see farmers calling for help. Number one problem.</p>
R10	<p>Speaking from experience like those around me who deal with those issues, the biggest issue is breaking down those barriers for people to learn how to communicate in those thought-provoking ways. In getting down to the nitty gritty of mental health. And learning how to communicate those needs. That's the biggest problem for sure in farm</p>

	<p>mental health. So many growing up in rural communities and never living in a metro area I don't think they were ever given the tools of how to communicate.</p>
R11	<p>I would say we don't know what we don't know. To ask a professional for help is good because we do it in other areas. If I don't know specific tactics or specific things about mental health, I would say asking a professional would help you understand the topic and how to deal with it.</p>
R12	<p>Well, you could certainly have someone to talk to. And to bring out some feelings of isolation. Their work is more than just their work. It's their life, it's how they identify themselves. To remove some of the isolation.</p>
R13	<p>I guess you'd wanna seek help as soon as you can. A lot of these guys have so much stress riding on them (Weather, commodity) that they end up committing suicide. So prevention of that. It's tough when you're around a person and your family has put with the behavior their whole life. Someone new can come in and realize there's something wrong with the person. Between you and I, that's what's going on here on the family farm. [Name] wasn't able to farm 1500 acres mentally by himself. Weather with these farmers drives them crazy. Rain is acid rain. The hurricane winds, not enough rain, I wish it would have rained here, I wish it wouldn't here. It's constant. A lot of these guys sit here and dwell on things they can't change. My dad's dad, still has the dairy farm. Their family all came together to start a big dairy operation. Over 5 years, it can get to be too many chiefs and not enough indians. Farmers work by themselves all the time because we don't want anyone's help. Anyways, it got to the point where it's too many chiefs. My dad was never home with my mom or [name] and I. My grandpa hung guilt over my dad to spend more time on the farm. So, that's why my parents got divorced. The older guys don't care about others' watch. Most of the time, they don't show up on time if it's someone else's time schedule. Farmers don't have a time clock. When it's time to go in the field, I don't care who died or what you gotta go. They're selfish and you gotta do your work.</p> <p>[Name] is type-A personality. Everything has got to be very clean. Then there's middle of the road guys and then you got the lazy, messy ones.</p> <p>With my family history, both my grandparents still farm today, but not with each other at all. What made it stressful, in dairy/cattle operation, you have zero life. It's every single day. What's a vacation?</p>
R14	<p>Well, I would guess it would be that it will help the individual get through some difficult times if they seek help. Whether they're battling depression or some other mental health issues. The more mentally healthy you are, the better you'll be in any occupation, including farming. The more mentally stable you are the better it would be to work with them.</p>
R15	<p>Advantages are obviously if a farmer is experiencing negative stress that's affecting his life and he can't handle it appropriately within the confine of his family and friends,</p>

	<p>rather than let it eat away at you, destroy your wellbeing and quality of life then it's best to seek professional help. However, if you're the one that's stressed out and you have to seek professional help, logically it might be appropriate, it's hard to admit to yourself that you can't handle it. That's the conundrum, you're damned if you do and damned if you don't.</p> <p>Like drug addiction or alcohol addiction, you need to get to the root of it to seek equilibrium on your own accord. That's the rational way to think, but people aren't always thinking rationally. Some can turn to alcohol, drugs or physical abuse. If you have a lot of self-pride, it's a stigma. Mental health carries a stigma. If you have hemorrhoids, you go in and treat it. You don't want to advertise it in the church bulletin, but there's no stigma attached to it like mental health treatment.</p>
R16	I think it would help them get through the tough time, the mental issues that they're dealing with.
R17	I think if they actually seek help, it could save relationships. It could save farms. It could save lives. Depression can lead to suicide which obviously upends everything. Life loss, relationship loss, then potential for whole operation to crumble or dissolve.

What do you see as the disadvantages of a farmer seeking help for a mental health issue in the next [1 month, 3 months, 12 months]? What are the bad things that might happen to <i>you</i> (or <i>a farmer you know</i>) if you (or he/she) sought help for a mental health issue?	
R1	It's a stigma thing. They're worried about someone else figuring them out. If I'm seeing a counselor, someone will think I'm crazy. I'm not right for farming, farming isn't right for me. I'm failing my legacy of the family farm. Seeing a counselor is the admission of this isn't work or the beginning of the end.
R2	Time is a big factor. Still there's the stigma of others. Not that they would feel that way but that they're seeking help and questioning them. If one farmer seeks help, then they'd have to address it with their friends.
R3	<p>Stigma, for sure. They're afraid that people will hear that they had to go see the therapist. They're very prideful. They're independent. The pride thing can really hurt them which is one of the things, no one calls me anything but Ted. The identification is he knows more about this than I do, let's just talk to him.</p> <p>I teach them to say those things; let's give Ted a call. It's not Ted the therapist. It's not Ted the mental health person. Mental health = mental illness. I'm not crazy, why are you calling me mentally ill? That stigma becomes a really important factor when dealing with farmers.</p>

R4	Well, I had a sales rep of mine (25 yrs ago, 1980's) and he was heavily leveraged. He bought some land and then interest rates went up and commodity prices were down in the tank. He was going backwards pretty fast. I talked to him about this and it was really tough. He was ready to go out to the shed and shoot myself. My wife figured it out and got me some help. I was at a different point in my life, I was messed up. I thank my wife everyday for helping me. Some people don't want to admit that they have a problem. They don't want to admit that they have a problem. Then they may not get the help they need. Self-denial - that's a disadvantage.
R5	In their mind, they were admitting they had a problem. Their friends and neighbors would soon find out about it. They would be judged negatively in their minds. If they really sought help and told people, they would find many of their neighbors and friends have had similar circumstances and could gain support. Though, they don't know that.
R6	I don't know if there are any. If someone found out, they may think that person is weak. That person has problems or not doing that well in the farming industry. I don't know. That's all. Farmers don't want to act weak, they're tough. They want to conceal weakness.
R7	Perception-wise, a lot of farmers are somewhat conservative, very independent minded and don't want to air their own perceived weaknesses. They dislike that, it's really hard for them. They will not share easily. They've grown up to work hard, be independent, not asking for handouts, not asking for them. They're worried that other people will think less of them. A lot of misconceptions. They don't want word getting out to their neighbors that they're having issues. They want to be strong, reliable. They want to make a living. It's a cultural thing. There's a lot of rural people - they think differently of what they hear in popular media. They consider themselves really different than east coast, west coast or problems folks are having in urban areas. They don't consider themselves to have similar issues. They think of themselves as really different.
R8	Making them feel weak or vulnerable. Making them feel defeated, like it was something they weren't able to do themselves. If I told a farmer that it would be wise to get help, it could have negative consequences on me, like they feel like they've been judged. It may even negatively impact my seed sales. I don't think I've been at it for long enough for them to trust my opinion. For someone that's been in the industry a lot longer than I have might have a better shot.
R9	Not feeling that they can talk to qualified people that can fully understand the situation. I always say, if you haven't been there and done it, you don't understand.
R10	For me the biggest barrier for farmers is insurance. I don't know if that's something you've found yet, both my mom and dad have been full time on the farm for 30 years. The lack of consistency in healthcare coverage for independent business is a huge stress. So many of our neighbors' premiums have shot up. There's so much anxiety around this. There's such a lack of consistency. My parents in the last 4 years have had 5

	different insurance plans because they've been dropped. The insurance is an added stress. Having a spouse off the farm to bring in insurance is huge. If you don't have that, it's a huge headache. That is definitely a barrier. Shortage of mental health care providers in a rural area. I actually know of a lady who is a mental health professional and she's married to a farmer. She started a private practice in our area because there's such demand.
R11	Admitting that you don't know everything. Getting over yourself. Admitting that you possibly have a problem because there's a social stigma attached to mental health issues. You're standing in your community and peer circle maybe is at risk.
R12	I don't know if there are a lot of disadvantages. However, there's a lot of reasons why they wouldn't. Cultural talk. Modeling behavior that they've seen in the past. I don't think it's negative, I just don't think a lot seek it out.
R13	If word got out, maybe landlords might consider pulling stuff from them because they're not thinking right. The most chatty people on this planet are rural farmers about certain things about "[name] was out here planting and I see him swerving all over" or "this brand of dryer is dog shit, I would never buy it." Everyone doesn't really know what's going with [names] as we take over the farm and oh, what are they up to.
R14	Probably just the stigma of needing help would be the only thing I could think of.
R15	It takes time. It's not free. If I got to the point where I was so stressed out that it was affecting the quality of my life, there is no negative side. The negative side is perceived. When you need help you need help. Again, that's the logical approach. We both know that people are not always logical when people are under pressure. They make less than scholastic decisions.
R16	I would say the time it takes cause we're all so busy. Another disadvantage would be the stigma. I gotta go see a professional for my mental health. I wouldn't like to do that, I'm fine.
R17	I think it's getting better, but there's still stigma. I hate to lump farmers in a group, but there's a lot of pride, self-reliance. Their used to problem solving and they can fix it. They're used to fixing their own problems. As a group, they don't seek outside help, unless a dire situation. It's still seen as a weakness, maybe a pride issue. That's the barrier.

Please think of individuals or groups who would approve or think that you (or a farmer you know) should seek help for a mental health issue in the next [1 month, 3 months, 12 months]. For example, it could be your spouse, your father/mother, your children, your

	brother/sister/other relatives, your best friend, your neighbor, your pastor/priest, your church group or bible study, your doctor, your employer, etc.
R1	<p>Ag loan lenders could be good referrals. They are trained and they know all of the input costs and revenue forecast of things you're producing and proposing to do in your farm plan. The more leveraged you are (less capitalized, younger, more stressed), the more scrutiny there is from the bank. If I'm newly involved, have a loan on the farm and I am asking for a lot of money, there's a lot of scrutiny. The lender will be the first one to see the tear in someone's eye or a lump in their throat. Doctor is also really critical whether they see someone injured or in the ER because of something sporadic. Sometimes employers, too. For those farmers who work off the farm.</p> <p>In rural MN, the idea is to mind my own business. Alcoholism and domestic violence are things people turn to. Also drug use, opioids.</p>
R2	<p>Their wives or husbands, whoever the farmer is. The younger generation (their kids). Healthcare workers. Clergy would; that's probably where most mental health is addressed in that population. It's huge part of clergy's time. Because it's OK to go to church. It's O.K. to talk to their pastor or clergy members; it's easier to hide it at church than at a clinic. Someone could recognize their car at the clinic.</p>
R3	<p>All of them if it's addressed in a way that keeps their comfort level. It's more a matter of looking at them and us saying, "We're simply a part of their life." A part of many, many parts. The stigma is there. If you're in a clinical setting, someone makes an appt. To see you. Most people know you're going to get a diagnosis. If there's no insurance involved, there's no reason to get a diagnosis. If you don't have that, you don't have to get into those stigmas. A lot of things aren't covered by insurance. I only have to chat with them for 5, 10, 15 min via phone vs. paper work, people coming in for an appt. I do speaking engagements relatively often. People come up and talk to me about their own specific issues. I don't know their name a lot of the time, and I don't need to. I just go through the process with them. People aren't threatened by that. I'm not analyzing them. They're so scared of that. I don't want to analyze them, that's work. People think that's all we do. Everytime we talk to someone we're analyzing their thoughts.</p>
R4	<p>Family for sure. Friends. Clergy. Ag lenders, they're in it with them too. Take responsibility. If it's weather, it's not your fault, it's the way it is. Don't put blame on the co-op, you got to take responsibility for your operation. Get over the weather. It'll be a better day tomorrow.</p>
R5	<p>Their family would want them to - spouse, children, siblings. There's a lot of siblings that farm together. Sometimes there's a big rivalry where you were in the family - oldest or youngest. The oldest is not always the leader. Are they considered the leader of the family clan even though they aren't the elder? Their siblings and family would want them to seek help.</p>

R6	The wife would be very strong on that. They would understand more the day to day and what's really bothering them. She would have the strongest support. Doctors are fine, but they don't know everything that's happening. Maybe some neighbors that see some issues arising. Family and wife.
R7	Farmers who have had to seek help would approve. Spouses and relatives who observe the stresses of the producer would approve. Mental health professionals would approve. There's more acceptance than a lot of folks really understand. Sometimes you end up letting down your guard and someone says, "hey that's happened to me too." It's not as forbidden as people make it out to be. They usually find out later that this usually happens later on. It's a stressful environment; it's been that way on and off for a while. Financials and pressures of the culture to perform well and succeed. There's various economic times that were worse than others - one is right now. The other was the 80's. It's easy to be farming and making money when you have \$5 corn commodity, but when it's \$3, it eats away at you.
R8	Several customers that would benefit from it. They're all nearing that retirement age. Early-mid 50's. Less than 5 that I'm aware of. Not initially, no. Always be met with resistance.
R9	In the 80's and I had lots of customers in the seed side that was in trouble. They would come to our agency and sit down and openly talk about their situation. I got a software program and I would run different options for them. Run possibilities to take to their lenders. Being there to listen. #1 thing: if they can find someone to listen, listen. 36 at Pioneer, I mean I've dealt with people across the U.S., with people in Congress. I've been in many roles with different groups of people. Lots of time, farmers can't talk to their parents about it because they're so embarrassed and that their a failure. They fear of letting their parents down because that would mean letting their family farm down which has been around for generations. Biggest hang up, I see. I don't have the answer. Having somebody that understands and willing to listen to them and give support.
R10	Some of our farm organizations (Farm Bureau), they have made a great pivot. In any of the conferences or meetings that they have, they've put mental health at a forefront. Only 5% of membership shows up to those events. Also answering to the opioid crisis. At every meeting they have, they have pamphlets, they have anxiety brochures. Some of our bankers and lenders would also approve. I personally am an advocate. I ask that of my farmers now.
R11	Anybody who is interested in thinking. People who talk without thought aren't the right ones to be confiding in. Any body who really is aware of the implications of mental health issues and thinking of people on a personal level.
R12	Most ag professionals. You're looking at consultants. Elevator managers. People that they'd buy their supplies from. Clergy would be very supportive. I would hope that

	friends and confidants would be as well. That would be my vision. That would be the most important.
R13	<p>Direct family: wife, kids. There was an instance where a farmer freaked out at [name] and others who worked with them. So basically, anyone working with them who experiences their unstableness. Farmers will take certain drugs to stay awake. Not the majority, but some do. Like planting or harvest. Some guys have multiple crops and they only get a couple hours of sleep per night and they start thinking crazy. Last fall, I wasn't able to get my truck out of the ditch when I got stuck. Thank god, I had other guys around me because I was falling apart mentally, starting sobbing a little bit. I couldn't problem solve normally.</p> <p>Farmers don't want to go get counseling, they don't. [Name] does not want to get any help. There's a side (he's nice to the outside community), but when it's just us, he's a different guy. He's happy/cheery, but then the other side is more stressed and frazzled.</p>
R14	I don't know anyone who wouldn't approve of it. Can't think of family, friends, neighboring farmers who wouldn't approve of it.
R15	That could be varied. Church community, neighbor, family member, wife that is also involved in the farm, it could be a number of individuals, family doc, banker, insurance agent. It'd have to be someone familiar enough with the individual situation that they could see things are going haywire. There again, we know that people rather than get involved, it's easier just to turn a blind eye to the problem. Family members it's harder. It's easier for someone involved to say "oh, they need help." Pastor/priest, someone that is intimately involved. Because a random person won't know their soul/life without being invited. Sometime it could be law enforcement if it's abuse. There's a lot of sickass ways people express their stress.
R16	The person's family would approve of it. I think their close friends would approve.
R17	It's starting to be more acceptable. It's an OK thing to seek help for. It's not like it was 20 years ago even. As a whole society, they're more accepting and encouraging. I think the world is moving that way even though stigma still exists. Moving in the right directions.

Please think of individuals or groups who would disapprove of you (or a farmer you know) seeking help for a mental health issue in the next [1 month, 3 months, 12 months]. For example, it could be your spouse, your father/mother, your children, your brother/sister/other relatives, your best friend, your neighbor, your pastor/priest, your church group or bible study, your doctor, your employer, etc.	
R1	In some cases, ag loan lenders just because they may not grant loans to farmers who are incredibly stressed out or are in financial trouble.

R2	I don't think anyone would disapprove. People in their older generation might question it. There are people that need probably more mental health counseling/support. They are the ones would be the most critical, yet they probably need help the most.
R3	<p>People who see it as there is something wrong with you. Any group who would see it as there's something wrong with you. I would say, this pretty general, but men. Women call me all the time and "my husband..." and I say, no, have him call. He has the ability. It's surprising how many women don't know that. That's a whole different issue. Women on the farm has changed farms more in the last 50 yrs than the last 5,000 years. Forever, men's job was to go outside do the farming, chores, etc. Women's job was to raise little farmers and do everything in the house. A 10 yr old boy could show his mom what she needed to do for a little chore outside the house. Now, women do the books. They have an opinion. Now, they're informed. A John Deere tractor is \$400,000. Can't we get a used one or a smaller one? They're invested and they have an opinion. That never happened before. That made things difficult to deal with, they can't talk to their mothers or grandmothers about this and the men can't talk to their parents either..they have to learn together how to work to get things done. They have nothing to fall back on because it didn't exist. Because the women did things in the home, now women work outside the home. If they work, they have outside friends, interests and all kinds of things. Women cite communication as the biggest issue on the farm. That creates a pretty big issue. Is it because they're women, who cares? Not a male/female issue. There are men who can communicate and women who can't at all. The most important part is not what you say, but how you listen. We need to be validated as human beings. Who's more important to be validated by our spouse. If we're not doing that, what do we do? If a person who needs to comm, can't with their spouse, they're going to call someone else. How do we just simply start to communicate. As important as communication is, we have less time. Women are working off the farm and doing the books. It's fars more important now than it was in the past. There is no gender in farming anymore. Farming is a husband and wife endeavor. Or a family endeavor. If the two work together and well, everything is better than it ever was in the past. Now, you can share the load with someone. People really need to learn. I can't stand the people who constantly blame (he doesn't talk enough, she talks too much). They just need to learn to communicate.</p>
R4	I don't know who would disapprove. It would be a very, very short list. I can't think of anyone would disapprove. That'd be very negative for someone to disapprove.
R5	The person with the mental problems are going to think people will disapprove, but they won't. I think they would gain a lot of support . A lot of farmers have strong faith in god so they would have a lot of support from their church members and clergy. They would fully back farmers.
R6	I don't know. That's tough. I don't know if anyone would really disapprove if more of get them maybe someone would make fun of it. Maybe another farming group, comes

	back to farmers are tough and they don't want to let them know anything is bothering them. Maybe someone closely working with them would disapprove.
R7	Probably some of their peers who have a lot of vibrato. There's a lot of macho men who think you're weak because you're going into therapy, suck it up, tough it out, move on, shut up, I don't want to hear about it. Probably some of their own friends or family (lay odds, it's likely more male dominated who would disapprove). Male dominated industry anyway. Gets into the locker room mentality. Tough guys are independent.
R8	If a farmer did seek help, they wouldn't tell anyone. They would feel like they've been defeated or they lost. It wouldn't be known to the public by any means. Not even their friend group.
R9	Nope
R10	I think that's still very much a stereotype to be a farmer, I would err more in the livestock farm that there's a macho man who can't ask for help. You have to be tough and gruff, but that's not what farmer is anymore. It doesn't take manual labor anymore. You have to wear so many hats in agriculture. Even just the social media aspect of how much pressure it puts on farmers when there's risk of new school referendums being built. It costs farmers more because they own more land. We don't have the votes anymore because there is less farmers. So many outside factors: taxes, politics, Trump has been a big concern, stereotype. I just think a big thing is that we aren't teaching people our inner communities how to have the right communication skills. How to know if your dad is having an anxiety attack. After you get done with a grueling harvest season and your brother ends up not leaving the house for a month. My brother struggles with depression and anxiety. There are times when he's not around, but we get through it. It took many years for me and my family to learn how to deal.
R11	Non-thinking, non-caring. Whoever that would be. I don't like to lump people together. I'm going to leave it at that general statement. I can't think of people who would point fingers at you other than stupid people.
R12	I don't think you'd have a lot of disapproval although I don't think you would have a lot of assistance. You wouldn't get a lot of counsel and assistance from neighbors you're in competition with.
R13	I don't know if anyone would really. I would think it would be better for everyone involved. Wouldn't be anything negative about it. People are going to have their own opinions regardless, but more or less if word got out, your neighbors might knock you down a bit. "Don't go over there to his house, he's a weird duck..." Other farmers might judge you.
R14	No, none comes to mind.

R15	Nobody outwardly would disapproves, but you know how society is. People talk and gossip and look at mental health issues as less than positive. No one in their right damn mind would disapprove from seeking help.
R16	No. I think everyone would be on board with that.
R17	<p>Anyone with a lack of education, communication. Being out of the loop. I think people are becoming more aware of those things. It's kind of like postpartum depression. I'm a labor/delivery nurse. You get overwhelmed with emotion and hormones. You sometimes think you're in over your head. Over a couple weeks and for some people it can. You should ask for help. Temporarily, you might just need a little bit of medication to get you back on track.</p> <p>Same with farmers it can be situational, a phase, a thing that you move through. It's not forever. If that was more communicated with families. You might just need a little help here and there and that's OK.</p>

Are there any other individuals or groups who come to mind when you think about <i>you</i> (or <i>a farmer you know</i>) seeking help for a mental health issue in the next [1 month, 3 months, 12 months]? (For example, your immediate friend group, other parents who attend your kids' school, ag loan lender, seed sales rep, etc.)	
R1	Groups of farmers in co-ops. Used to be much tighter than we are now. Know who's more stressed or less stressed.
R2	No. The farmers are self-employed. It's not like they're taking off work. That's more of the obstacle. Sometimes, if people are employed, the boss will be like how much time do we have to give you? But they're on their own time.
R3	-
R4	Nope
R5	A lot of farmers consider their neighbors competitors, yet also friends. There's a double-standard that you can be my friend, but we still compete for the best yields. If land comes up for rent, we compete on that and yet we're buddies. There's a lot of double-edged swords with farmers and their relationships. If there's any potential at all in their mind that things could be negative, that's why they don't say anything.
R6	Banker/ag loan lender. Would be very supportive, they know a lot of details about farmers (money side of things that really causes stress). Money is key. It's the unknown: weather, prices, selling, it's so stressful. More people are struggling with this. Pastor would be very good. Very closely intertwined with families at church.

R7	I suppose clergy would be good. There's a fair amount of people that cross over. Fair amount of awareness that's been created. Tim Pawlenty was quoted the other day saying we don't have enough mental health capabilities, we're going to have to fund that better. Why can't we solve that? There's a lot more knowledge and social viewpoint about the perceived stigma of suicide and there's more public awareness than I ever remember the last 35 years. You've got two major news cases lately - two famous people committed suicide and the news is all over it. Big time coverage. Negative-wise it's probably the people that don't believe mental health is something that we need to watch out for. They think you solve it on your own. They think of it as a sign of weakness. They don't see it as an imbalance of brain chemistry. People think they're crazy, they're not crazy, there's just an imbalance going on. It's kind of a foreign concept.
R8	Anyone on the sales side of things would 100% approve. We deal with farmers on a daily basis and can see it. Though, we don't give our advice. It would impact anyone that works in the ag profession that deals with these farmers. They'd make more sound decisions, sometimes farmers make rash decisions. It would positively impact those who deal with farmers on a daily/weekly basis.
R9	-
R10	I would like to think that we would have more camaraderie between farmers from a social group standpoint. We should be able to rely on. We're so good at helping people when there's a physical illness (neighbor breaks his back, we can get 7 tractors there and gets all his work done). If he has a suicide attempt, help isn't readily available like that. We have to rally around those people when those types of things happen.
R11	When it comes to friends, if they're really friends they'd be supportive of whatever it takes to be happy and healthy. I would expect that professionals that I use would look at mental health in the same light as other physical ailments. A farmer needs to be in the best shape to perform their tasks. I tend to hang out with positive-minded people so I'd like to think that everyone in my circles would be supportive.
R12	I probably forgot family - brothers, sisters. That could be a mixed bag. There could be some animosity toward the individual that's farming related to family. Or the land base. If mom and dad are gone and if someone had to buy the other siblings out. Pretty tough family situations.
R13	Maybe your banker or your loan officer. If they got word on that, they might think "should I be borrowing this guy money?" Landowners could also get worried because you're taking care of their land.
R14	-
R15	-
R16	Nope

R17	-
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What factors, circumstances or settings might enable or make it easier for you (or a farmer you know) to seek help for a mental health issue in the next [1 month, 3 months, 12 months]?	
R1	-
R2	Proximity. In MN we need more rural providers. If I put somebody in counseling, it's a 3 month wait, unless they're in severe crisis. I see people travel 30-40 miles to come see me. Location of services is huge and the time it takes to travel. What would make it easier is coming to them – phone calls or telehealth.
R3	If they come to farm meetings (all the time), I'll simply just be a piece of it. If they're going to listen to an agronomist, whatever. And then they throw me in to talk about their mental health. Low-key, comfort level. They start seeing it as non-threatening so they can step forward. In working with all of these other agencies that have this comfort level with mental health, it's easier for farmers to reach out.
R4	If he's really down and out, hopefully people would not resort to hurting themselves. There's solutions out there that they won't have to resort to that. If they've exercised everything else...I just hope they're aware that there is help. 50,000 acre farm in ND went belly up back in 2017. He owed \$40 million and his assets were \$10 million. I don't know if he's going to farm again or not. Liquidate him or take their losses. When you get to that point, that guy probably needs some help. He was a victim of bad weather. One year, he wasn't able to harvest and he didn't have insurance to cover him. He just couldn't recover his losses.
R5	If they're aware that help was available locally. Whether county or city level, school district, if there's a mental health center that makes it known that we have people on staff that can help with depression, financial coaching. People on hand that can help you manage transition plan or succession plan. There's always a lot of turmoil in their mind mentally like will the farm go to my kids? Will someone take it on? I don't want to be accused of child brutality, but I'd my son to farm, take it over.
R6	I think a farmer would have a hard time stopping and going in and sitting at a convention and talking with someone. Maybe in the winter they could do more of that. Maybe a hotline or calling thing they could do while sitting in the tractor. Do it more confidentiality in the cab alone. Times are really busy so it's hard to up and go into town. While they're clicking a GPS and sitting there.
R7	Farmers are probably sharing some of their deep-seeded concerns with a spouse or close relative. Or a real close friend or a pastor or doctor. It's likely going to be pretty private.

	<p>It's not likely going to be shown the light of day. They won't ever show up for small groups and talk about it. I don't know how you get passed that stigma. A learned/accepted behavior over time. Same with opioid addiction. People trying to figure out some of these other diseases. We've been chasing cancer and heart disease for a number of years. Peer groups is also another circumstance. Depends who you're around. If you're not around people who are talking about their feelings, you probably won't bring it up.</p>
R8	<p>First, they would have to know it's available. You never see or hear of any time of program available to farmers. You hear of a lot of behavioral, emotional help to kids and teens. The county agency or extension or banker or gov. Of farm officials, if something was available there. I think they would do it if they knew about something. There's nothing there so there's really nothing available.</p>
R9	<p>Basically, if you can hold a farm group setting in some type of ag setting or business, is probably the best because they just have a problem going to these so called consulting people or mental health professionals. Extension has done a pretty good job, or has tried with this model. If you set up this format of the meeting just on the mental health thing, that's going to turn people away. If you have a meeting with various presentation topics and one is on mental health, you're going to have a group there already that wouldn't show up otherwise. Make it a part of the conference, weave it in. As a single bullet, it doesn't work.</p>
R10	<p>I think a discussion needs to happen. That's the first step. Whether it's rural health care professionals, asking those kind of questions. There's no farmer that likes to go to the doctor or the dentist. When we do get those few moments, I've talked to one of my girlfriends, she's an OT. If there was a tool like that (a survey that allows people to talk, not in person), that could open the door. It's insane how many high school students are going into inpatient treatment for depression in rural areas. MN specifically, pediatricians are working to build on this (survey tool).</p>
R11	<p>In the last several months, there's been press around this topic. From a public awareness situation, it's easier to talk about a topic if it is on the front of people's consciousness. If you just pull up a topic out of left field that no one's given any thought about it might come off differently than another that's been talked about.</p> <p>Rotary meeting - one person there asked a question about mental health and suicide in farmers and what I knew about that topic. I did not expect to get that question that day. When you look at the group, they were truly interested in whatever answers I came up with. Probably 35 people that were exposed again to that topic.</p>
R12	<p>You would need supportive people. To support that idea and encourage it. Support recommendations for resources. Farmers learn from hearing from others like them. Anything that supports that or talks about it would be important.</p>

R13	It would almost have to be a sneak attack on them. Like, just for instance our John Deere salesman, does a lot just counselling. How's it going? You going good? You and [name] getting along? You can't just sit down and schedule an appointment, you have to do it in the moment. It's too much of a prideful thing. It costs me money, I don't want to do it and I don't know. Worst combination of people is father-son. Right away, it was a little uncomfortable with [name]. You wouldn't want to stir things up. Now, I'm more efficient, pointing things out and now we are butting heads. I'm surpassing him in certain things, in things I'm getting educated on. The older generation didn't grow up with certain technology or certain ways so they don't see benefits of new ideas. That's tough and that's where it gets awkward. Our relationship is better than a farmer-son combo. Now, we're getting too comfortable with each other so we tell each other off every once and awhile. You tell each other what you're doing right or wrong. I have a better situation than most.
R14	Probably the ease of finding someone. Being able to find someone that will help them with the problems they're dealing with. Financial help. If they are dealing with financial problems or cost of the help. Individual insurance which most farmers have is pretty expensive.
R15	Confidentiality is very important. Doctors are confidential, hypothetically. Legal people, hypothetically. Clergy is confidential. Even teachers have a level of confidential responsibility. The rumor mill exist. There are people that are so lame-ass and they rely on social media that's denigrating issues.
R16	Access not too far from their home. That would be the main thing.
R17	Communication makes it easier. Humor is huge. There's this women's conference for farmers and they use humor to address stress. Even if they're in the background (bills, employees), they feel the stress. Humor is good and conferences that have brought people in to meet people. Bring it to the forefront of people's attention.

What factors, circumstances, or settings would make it difficult or prevent you (or a farmer you know) from seeking help for a mental health issue in the next [1 month, 3 months, 12 months]?	
R1	Health insurance. They have to pay for mental health services out of pocket.
R2	Same thing. Opposite.
R3	Trust. People talking about "did you hear Bob attempted suicide?" This fallacy that farmers are quiet guys, they just go outside, have a piece of straw in their mouth, etc. That's how people see farmers and it's just stupid. You just go into a restaurant and it's deafening how many people are talking at the same time. What do they talk about? -

	<p>how so in so lost their farm, why didn't they do this, they could've done this, criticizing each other but such and such, trouble on their farm. If they do get into trouble on their farm, they won't go to that cafe anymore because they know people are going to talk about them. They don't want to be judged.</p> <p>What's needed is a healthier environment: be respectful of each other, don't criticize each other. It's bad enough to lose the farm, but they then lose their friends and their trust in their friends because they know that environment exists.</p>
R4	<p>Denial is probably the biggest thing. People don't want to admit that they're in trouble. Denial, I suppose. In the developing countries (India and China), the rate of suicide is a lot higher. A lot are illiterate. If they have a crop failure, it's a disaster. Some of them only have an acre. If they don't get anything, their families will starve. It's a stigma. That they failed. Hopefully farmers here have crop insurance to protect them against that calamity. Their living costs are really tight. Their wives are working elsewhere just to get some health insurance. It's so expensive. BCBS dropped all of their individual accounts and one of my friend's with cancer has to pay for his treatment out-of-pocket. That's a disaster, a big item out here in rural America.</p> <p>Insurance might not cover mental health help so that could be a reason why they don't go in. There would be no reason why they wouldn't go if it was free. But then again, there's a stigma. I'm sure it's case by case, but you can't ignore the stigma. Depends what your support group is.</p>
R5	<p>The circumstances of the economy or the weather. When things are good, they don't have a lot of mental health issues, but they still might be saying to themselves, "things are good, should I expand? Should I buy more land to expand my operation?" Even those things are good, those things might be weighing on their mind. If I tell anyone, I don't want them getting the same idea.</p>
R6	<p>Comes back to the public perception. Worried about people not being confidential. People finding out. Farmers are tough. Most farmers do everything themselves, they can handle it; they don't want help. That's majority of how most farmers are.</p>
R7	<p>Cost. Worried about healthcare. A lot of time they're individually-covered and it can be expensive. Esp. the first visit with a provider, they're ringing the register. Sometimes, you may not feel you're getting value out of it.</p> <p>Access. Do they click with the "mental health professional?" You get some so-called people that are supposed to help you and if you don't feel comfortable, you don't want to be there. Don't want to force it. Nobody likes being forced into stuff. You need to find someone with some level of similar type of loss that I could relate to, that I could trust. Some were my coworkers, some were my friends. Initially, it's really hard for people to find someone to talk to that won't break their bank. Talking to a loser is going to ruin someone's appetite for people to reach out.</p>
R8	<p>It would have to be confidential. You'd have to advertise the program discreetly. They're not going to want to have others know that their seeking mental health.</p>

R9	Basically, like we talked earlier about these mental health consultants that farmers have no faith, no trust. That type of avenue.
R10	If the farm economy changes and gets better. If we have higher yields, higher prices, etc. If it increases, (would be awesome), unfortunately for all groups advocating, it could have an adverse effect. When things are going well, no one wants to talk about getting help for a mental health issue. Timing has to be right with the economy. Stigma mainly.
R11	The stigma around mental health has always been different than a physical ailment. Walking around with a cast or crutches, people can identify there is a problem. When it's in someone's mind, it's not always evident. If it's to the point where it's evident to passersbys, you're clear. Everyone has their own personality. Is this person always like this or is something going on and that they're dealing with something.
R12	The nature of the business. It's held very tightly. Huge capital base, but very small earning potential. Sometimes debt and the feelings of failing the family or not making the farm run. People want to keep that stuff private. If they're letting down the generational family farm.
R13	If they don't think they have a problem. They aren't admitting to an issue. There's nothing wrong with me. The big thing is something getting out that you lost your mind and everybody knows it. There's a lot of reason we don't do a lot of stuff because it's like a half hour to go get something. We don't go out to eat so often because it takes a long time to go there and come back.
R14	Having a hard time finding someone to talk to. Less likely to keep digging to find someone.
R15	Time, money, obligations, transportation. A lot of farm people have individual health insurance and it's very expensive. Many instances, spouses don't work outside the farm so they're not on commercial insurance. The ship is sinking already, how do I justify spending more money on treatment? Money talks.
R16	The distance they have to go. If we were to seek mental health help out here, we'd have to drive to get it. At least an hour away, it takes a good part of the day.
R17	I think a lot of farmers have insurance concerns. If they're going in for counseling, some of that stuff is expensive. A lot of time they're self-insured. There's huge deductibles, copays. Already when you're under financial stress, that's another stressor. There again people have to look beyond and see the bigger picture here. They're sacrificing, they don't see the big picture. \$2,000 vs. suicide or loss of the farm. They don't see the big picture. Spend a little bit now and it'll be a huge pay off.

Is there anything else that you associate with <i>you</i> (or <i>a farmer you know</i>) seeking help for a mental health issue in the next [1 month, 3 months, 12 months]?	
R1	<p>You're fiercely independent if you're a farmer. You're motivated to work 24/7/365. Stigma is the biggest thing for farmers. Bigger than in most employee/occupational settings. For other occupations, there's an HR person that is trained to help employees. That network doesn't exist with the farmer. The person is maybe their ag lender. Your implement dealer guy knowing that you've got other issues won't be the one to recommend help.</p> <p>Spouses and family members are the ones who also comes to the table to get dad help. Hidden poverty is very real, kids are embarrassed in school. Not the right clothes, not enough food, can't participate in kid activities that cost money.</p> <p>Often times it's the off-farm income that buys the clothing, groceries, etc. There often is no vacations, weekends away, trips, etc.</p> <p>Stigma - 3 and 4th generation so it's been there for a while. It's a ticklish situation for pastors and priests to reach out to folks. It's hard for us to say "they're making it" or "they're not."</p> <p>The responsibility needs to be at the spousal level (wives), but there is still some sexism there. He's the head of the house, she's assisting him.</p> <p>School counselors see it on the face of kids too. They should have more latitude on the good samaritan act and should be able to say someone should check in on this family. Very hard as a school to be able to do that. If you can get families to come to the table because your son is having a hard time in school, you'll soon realize it's because of the stress of financial struggles.</p>
R2	<p>Besides that window of time where they know things are going downhill and they can't do anything about it (how's it going, how long can I do this, etc.). I think farmers, and people in every profession, really define themselves on what they do; it's their life.</p> <p>There's that certain window of time you need to capitalize on and get them help before they go into utter despair and it's harder for them to come "back" so to say. Get them where they're still thinking rationally.</p>
R3	<p>There are far too many people that think they understand. It's a unique occupation. You need to understand how they think. You need to understand them to help them. You have to walk a mile in their shoes. See what they think and not judge it. It is what it is. Learn from that. If we can't do that, collectively we will not be able to help them. Just the idea that family farms no longer exist. The way we identify them in the past, they don't exist. It's not dad, mom and the kids. It is a rare thing to ask a farm family how many meals a day they eat together. If you find 3 that find that they do, that's</p>

	<p>impressive. Farming has changed drastically. If you want to help, you need to get that concept clearly. The old way of thinking has died, now 400 acres is a hobby farm. If you're thinking of it in the old way, then you're part of the problem, not part of the solution. We need to know who they are, not what they were.</p>
R4	<p>Michigan state has a good support line. They have 10 tips for tough times in farming. Some farmers are hooked up with farm advisers. Maybe there's some area that they could look at to improve record-keeping, money management. Vet, extension educators, open your records up to them and you can get some help, but some farmers don't want anyone else to know what's going on. When times get tough, guys cut back on fertilizer and in the long run, that could be the worst thing to do. Be realistic...it could hurt you. It could get you in a deeper hole. Land rent is a big expense. Farmers need to negotiate more with the landowners to get those prices down while commodity is down. Tom Emmers introduced a bill back in March called Stress. It's addressing the exact thing we're talking about today. It's going through Congress right now with the new farm bill. Give him a lot of credit in trying to do something about it. Trying to get funding. Then in the tide of rural economic stress and suicide. He's trying to get this through. 8 different legislators wrote the bill. Hopefully, that'll get included in the newest farm bill. Awareness. I'm wondering if companies like [company name] (direct contact with farmers - newsletters, blogs, tweets) and other ag companies could raise awareness of these crisis centers and resources available for people struggling. Even on social media. Could ag companies get the word out that there is help out there. It might make a difference with some people - "I didn't know that." Show that these hotlines are free and there 24/7. Most farmers are coping pretty well, some are not doing so well. Everyone is wired different. Go for a walk, go for a bike ride. At the end of the day, just wind down. Listen to soothing music. Some of these farmers are operating on 2-3 hours of sleep day. That can mess up the chemicals in your body.</p>
R5	<p>The only thing that keeps coming up in my head is how reluctant they are to seek that help. An ad campaign or local awareness of services that available would be great so that they could realize I don't have to drive 100 miles to get help. Professional, nearby, confidential. If there was a group that was in the same situation as they were, they might be more willing to go. Make farmers more aware vs. waiting for them to admit to a problem. Small group sessions.</p> <p>Could ask for recommendations on farmers struggling from those who work closely with them. People feel comfortable talking to someone they have a strong relationship with. Most of those health professionals, they wouldn't have a strong relationship with. Farmers need to say, "I think I need some help, do you know anyone? Or can you help me?" Even me working in the field for 50 yrs, I wouldn't feel comfortable taking that on. I would turn it over to the professional. I wouldn't want that responsibility, I would refer them on.</p>

R6	Nope. Hotline number is in the farm news. Rural helpline.
R7	Farmers have limited access to choices of mental health providers or they might be backed up. Usually when they need something, they need it pretty soon. You can't wait on it. If there's a waiting period for a health professional or see a big dollar sign, they're going to blow it off. I probably have the same view of this over my life anyway. Do you have to go to a therapist all the time, is that a good thing? You have to live through some of it. You can't solve everything easily just by going some place. Have to applaud the U for trying to figure some of these things out. It's the culture of the ag community, very independent. They fix stuff on their own, survive on their own. They confide privately or don't confide at all. A lot of that gets passed down by the family. My dad was saying, "keep a stiff upper lip, suck it up." Keep moving. It does work, you stay busy, you figure it out. Not everything needs to be a social program. It can't be, the country can't handle it, you can't solve all these things by having programs. Practically speaking, you can't do everything and you can't protect against everything. Low or no cost access early on. Getting them in the door is just a bitch. You see these movies where people take a long time to break down. Barriers: someone you don't know/don't trust. Everybody has scars. They'll heal over and sometimes you scratch it and they'll open up. Then they'll heal and they don't bother as much later on.
R8	A lot of times it seems like the farmer's' wives would be the ones to get them help. It could be directed at the spouses, potentially children, but maybe not (lot of father-son drama), spouses involved could get their husbands in. It could be extremely beneficial. Wives generally run the behind-the-scenes on farms. They sign the checks and get things in order. They're very persuasive. They could try to get their husbands in. This could be huge.
R9	It's a very complex issue, it's just that the stress factor is so high that it's just ways of managing stress better, so much is uncontrollable. Your dad survived the cuts, but so many are jobless at Pioneer. One guy I talked to last night, 50 yrs old and he's been with Pioneer for 8 years. A 22 yr old college kid comes in and replaces him. It's things like that. The problem in agriculture. Look at all the suicides we've had in southern MN this year. The problem is, it didn't happen this year. I was sales rep when the economy collapsed 3-4 years ago. These people that are supposedly the smart people don't realize that there's an issue until 3-4 years into. After the fact thought, that's what I see as the issue. You have to be proactive, you can't be behind the 8 ball. The system has to change. Be more responsive. Anybody with common sense knows that if you take corn down to \$3/bussel, there's trouble. It don't take a rocket scientist to figure this out. One guy I know is bringing up 50% of this profits. Pioneer won't let me advance any credit for farmers in a tight spot needing seed to plant. Some people have it totally out of their control. Other people, their standard of living is too high. They see their city counterparts spending money so they want to too. It's 100% impossible to get involved in farming if you don't have a parent in it. The capital needed is impossible.

R10	I think there's an aspect that people don't like to talk about farming. My dad and I have talked about it because he was very high stressed. PTSD from the 80's. Also, people living through farm accidents. There needs to be maybe more basic markers for people have been in those situations (on the site, or they've been the victim of a farm accident). So much can stem from any sort of trauma.
R11	-
R12	Culturally, we're very dependent on ourselves. We're fairly self-motivating because we have to plan so far ahead. So much takes planning and forethought. We're self-reliant and proud. And we fix everything. Farmers want to fix themselves so that's an impediment. However, they know that they have to rely on professionals to lean on for other aspects of their life. I don't know if anyone told you, but everyone is always \$75-100k in debt each crop they plant. There's no guarantee that you'll lose equity. Most livestock is below average pay. Either you're in for good or you're out for good. It locks people into these patterns and it locks people out. Most of my customers are fairly professional about their prep and lending and risk mgmt, but it doesn't make it easy. Even those with quite a bit of equity are going through the scrutiny of the lending process are doing so now and they never have been before. There used to be fairly easily operating lending loans you could get, now it's tougher. Things are changing on the landscape. Same time, our rental rates/land prices are high. Having access to the land is so competitive. Causing a lot of competition. [Name] can talk about that part of it because she deals with the finances. We invest so heavily because we invest in improvement of the land and we use it as a nest egg. It's pretty easy to take what might have been break even and take it down 150-\$200 below the break even line. It's one thing when you have all farm income, when you don't, that's a huge amount of stress. It probably freezes people from making really good decisions about finance to be realistic and nimble. It's hard to do with these crops, it's emotional. We're seeking to minimize losses and it's harder for people to pull the trigger in those situations.
R13	There's a lot always riding on their shoulders financially or mother nature. You don't fail horribly in front of everybody. That's the main thing. These guys are used to working alone. You do get goofy and forget how to interact people. You get a little crazy sitting in the cab memorizing every song on the radio. Sleep has a lot to do with it. My grandpa milking cows did it a long time and he suffered from a sleeping disorder. He'd go to bed at 8pm and start his day at 3 a.m. He'd then take a nap at lunch. That's a particular guy there who has a lot of mental health issues. If you get into the routine of that, then half the time you're going on hardly any sleep and you're thinking like a child. Then just putting that with all the financial stress, mother nature letting you get the crops in and out, paying your bills, etc. It's a lot.

R14	Anybody that realizes they need help is a good thing. Not everybody has what they need to cope with different problems so if you're trying to improve yourself and your family, that's always good I guess.
R15	There's getting to be more and more hotlines. A perceived crisis gets state and federal funding. Create avenues where there's help available. That part of it, I've never had to deal with so I am not so much aware of the help someone might acquire that someone may get. I haven't looked into it because it hasn't been an issue. When there's a perceived crisis.
R16	I think it would be a very good idea. There's a lot of farmers under a lot of stress and it's very hard on the family. If they're having issues, it would be best for them and their family.
R17	Spirituality is a big part of being a rural person. I'm outside a lot and I see god's hand at work all the time with the soil and the land. I think people need to keep that in perspective. Remember how blessed they are, a perspective of gratitude. As farmers being entrusted to the land. It's a huge thing. Not being so self-reliant in your trust in God. I think that's huge. People who live their life that way do reap the benefits of that.